

**Selected Poetr.****A STUDY.**

I think, indeed, 'twas only this that made her seem peculiar; namely, she had no familiarity. The world to-day expects us to be odd; to wear our hair extremely long, or extremely short; to have decided views on some one point. Of course, I had to examine my plain wardrobe and ruminated considerably, with my good aunt's help, to make it out. I scarcely knew myself in the glass, when I was finally enveloped in all the pretty things suitable for the occasion. Alas! it was quite different from the fancies of a few years ago! My ordinary phiz, looking out from its fairy setting, suggested forcibly the idea of a potato amid a cluster of rare exotics.

When I finally found myself in the spacious parlor of Mrs. B.—, surrounded with fair, luxuriant beauties and witching graces that glowed and melted like sunset clouds, with the music and dancing, the hum, the lively chit-chat, the bright, dizzy whirl of flowers, smiles, dimples, and bright eyes, and remembered that I was really only plain Susan Smith, with none who cared for me, no pretty ways and admiring friends like the other girls—I admit feeling somewhat of a pang, all the sage philosophings I had over read in books, and indulged in the closet to the contrary notwithstanding. I gave myself up to the dream that would come, amid the soft vague ripple of beauty that surrounded me. The dreams of the past, which I had thought long since conquered, bore me away in the dim maze, and for a time, bound me captive.

Gradually my philosophic spirit gained the ascendancy over the imaginative. The vague clouds of ribbons, musins, and pretty faces, together with the darker and taller forms in the background, became more tangible. I became conscious that I was surrounded by human beings; that I had an excellent opportunity for my favorite pursuit—the study of human nature. I soon became edified and amused in watching the course of divers little flirtations and manœuvres on the part of parties of both sexes. Yonder was a tall, dark-eyed, fine-looking young gentleman, who I perceived was quite a lion among the fair ones! All the artistry of dimples, blushing, and pink ribbons were skillfully employed by the respective proprietors thereof to storm the fortress. And he—he was smiling, affable, gallant, and by no means deficient in the use of weapons of his own. Yes, he was decided the centre piece of the picture—the reigning *beau* of the season. As for belles—there were two or three struggling for the ascendancy, and whether the one or the other triumphed was ascertained by the attentions of the superb Mr. Sunderland. The blue eyes of the fair Miss Ella French gleamed more tenderly, or the sparkling black ones of her rival flashed more brilliantly from beneath the long dark lashes as Mr. Sunderland's low tones were addressed to the first or the last. Indeed the divers feasts of diplomacy among both the brighter constellations of the evening and the lesser lights, were not unlike those of the political world to be observed along the pages of the *Congressional Globe*. So I amused myself in watching the course of things till my eyes fairly ached with the dazzle, and I took myself to a few gilded volumes which graced the centre-table, to catch breath a little in my natural element.

I turned over a few leaves, read a few verses of Tom Moore's dainty little nothings, and raised my head, to encounter—was I walking? had I not slipped into dreamland amid the bright whirl around me? No; awake, in the full possession of my senses, I encountered the gaze of those large black eyes of "Mr. Sunderland" fixed admiringly on me. Thank Fortune! I had strong nerves! so I did not faint, but kept on the even tenor of my way. I beheld the gentleman turn, seek out and address Mrs. B.—; that lady replied, glanced at me, and in another moment the two had advanced toward the corner where I sat, and "Mr. Sunderland" was introduced to "Miss Smith." Had the earth opened and swallowed us up, I could not have been more astounded. However, I had little time for conjectures, as the gentleman seemed desirous to enter into immediate conversation.

"A fine evening for a gathering! Mrs. R.— was a very interesting lady—a superb lady! quite a connoisseur, too! I was an old acquaintance of hers, was I not? Was I fond of attending *soires*? Would I give him the pleasure of joining him in the next *cotillion*?"

"Was not in the habit of attending *soires*. Did not dance."

"Ah, he suspected I was found of intellectual pursuits! He honored my choice! He did not himself find satisfaction in these light, frivolous amusements. He was most happy to find sympathy in a higher grade of enjoyment, etc."

For the first time in my life I felt the inconvenience of not having been initiated into the mysteries of these little evening *tete-a-tete*s. But, since regrets were of no avail, I was obliged to fall back upon plain, common sense, and reply in a straightforward manner to the best of my abilities. "True, I was not a little surprised at the literary turn this brilliant lady-killer had suddenly taken, but as there were so many queer things in this world—and particularly just now—I left it to ruminate upon in my own snug little room at home."

Now I had never attended a *soiree* excepting in imagination with the lovely heroines of newspaper stories; and was not only astonished with the idea that such a thing was possible, but was quite terrified at the prospect. "Tis true I had attended a few neighboring parties, and watched from a corner the progress of coquetry between the gay Lotharios and their fair ones; but this was

quite another thing. However, I really wanted to go, as a matter of curiosity; and since Mrs. B.— had shown me so much kindness, and even sent her own cousin Frank around to say he "would be happy to attend me" (which, by the way, I knew was a mistake), I decided to do so.

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Alas!

The world has grown so feverishly hot.

With restless aims and small ambitions, that

A life which has the cool and temperate flow

Of healthful purpose in its veins will seem

Peculiar!

[Galaxy]

(From the Waverly Magazine.)

**MY ONLY LOVER.**

I am an old maid. Do not start, dear reader, I am worse than that—a decidedly plain-looking old maid. I tell you this frankly, at the beginning, so that if you are expecting to hear a succession of romantic adventures, all about the loves and sorrows of "one of the fairest flowers on earth," you can make up your mind to be disappointed. Well, as I have said, I am exceedingly ordinary; not downright ugly—would that I were! for then there would be something remarkable about me—but just one of those ordinary flesh-and-blood mortals who go to fill up the niches, but whom nobody is ever at all struck with. Hair of the ordinary brownish, darkish color, and combed straight back; eyes of a grayish-blue [as nearly as I can ascertain]; skin darkish, yellowish, and very susceptible to pimples.

Neither have I a "certain ease and grace," a "facility in conversation" by which one might be led to forget the plain exterior. I have neither "sweetness" nor "brilliance" of manner. My poor, plain face is quite passive and expressionless. The soul is shut up closely closely in its barred prison house. This fleshly tabernacle seems, in my case, to be rather a wall of separation than a connecting link between myself and humanity. I have always lived very retired, and have been accustomed for want of society to solace myself with books and castle-buildings.

When I was just verging on young-ladyhood, I confess to having read such a quantity of novels as passionately to desire beauty and a heroic lover. But the beauty which I fondly dreamed that "sweet sixteen" or "lovely seventeen" would surely bring came not. I did not grow fairer, my hair did not gradually become soft and wavy, and my eyes were no more of an acre than formerly—in short, I was pretty much the same as ever, only more of me! Therefore, instead of the moonlight walks, the *soires*, the attentive admirers of my maidenly dreams, I, pale-faced, peaked-nosed Susan Smith, remained quietly at home all the long evenings, just because nobody ever asked me to do otherwise! And so, remaining all alone, and finding that no one was going to come along and pick me up—becoming painfully conscious of the fact that I was neither pretty enough for a "witching little fairy" not yet ugly enough for a "genius," I just gave up all the romantic notions I had ever indulged, and resolved, without one agonizing death struggle, calmly, firmly, resolved to submit to a life of single-blessedness.

Thus situated, I looked myself more than ever to reading. My uncle's scanty library was long ago exhausted, so I made degradations on neighboring ones, devouring everything which came in my way, from "Jack, the Giant-Killer," to "Walter Scott," and from the "Catechism" to Voltaire. I had just become nicely settled in all this, with a feeling of great contentment as to my lot, and had given up all ideas of ever having a lover, and being like other girls—and then came—but I am anticipating.

One day, when I was sitting with my aunt in the back parlor, hemming some pillow cases, and not dreaming that anything remarkable was going to happen to me, an invitation came for me to attend a *soiree* at Mrs. B.—'s. Now this same Mrs. B.— was a very fashionable lady, who, though usually conforming to the round of conventional society, let fly, occasionally, some strange sparks of eccentricity. It so happened that she had an extensive library, to which, through the acquaintance of my aunt, she had allowed me free access. Perceiving my fondness for books, and perhaps something of my habitual reserve, she strangely conceived the idea that I—Susan Smith—I, the plain, awkward, uninteresting, unnoticeable little nobody of a Susan Smith, was—"literary." And so she, being quite a naturalist in her way, and of course wanting to collect all sorts of curious animals for her menagerie on Wednesday evening, inviting me.

Now I had never attended a *soiree* excepting in imagination with the lovely heroines of newspaper stories; and was not only astonished with the idea that such a thing was possible, but was quite terrified at the prospect. "Tis true I had attended a few neighboring parties, and watched from a corner the progress of coquetry between the gay Lotharios and their fair ones; but this was

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Of course, I had to examine my plain wardrobe and ruminated considerably, with my good aunt's help, to make it out. I was living simply what she wished to live. A lovely life of rounded womanhood. With no sharp, salient points for eye or ear. To seize and pass quick judgment on. She was not quite content to let the golden days slip from her fingers like the well-worn beads of some long rosary, or the worn-out, mechanical routine. But yet she had no "central purpose," no absorbing aim to which all else must yield; and so the very sweetness of her life, its exquisite simplicity and calm, musical in its silence, struck the ear. More sharp than a discord would have done. Just as at sea, we grow accustomed to the jangly clang of harsh machinery, and sleep profoundly in our narrow berths and the turmoil; but if we wake, the noisy wake and the deep, low murmur of the ocean wave is all that stirs the air, we waken with a start, and ask in terror what has happened; then sink back again and smile to think, indeed, that silence should have wakened us!

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evident the proud beauties were exceedingly vexed. Perhaps, now, this was just a ruse of his for that very purpose! If so, it was an excellent one, and I'd help him to the utmost in my power. Indeed, I liked the idea exceedingly, and laughed and chatted with the animation thus inspired.

Whatever might have been the cause of the phenomenon, it was evident, as the entertainment drew to a close, that he meant to keep it up; for he not only asked me the pleasure of becoming my cavalier for the evening, but begged to be allowed to see me often at my own home. And so, when I had at last established myself in snug quarters for the night, it was only to puzzle my brain with vague conjectures as to whether the conduct of my sudden admirer was due to some sudden pique of his, to a disgust for the vanities of the world, or to my own (possible) charms.

It was only a few evenings after the *soiree* when, as I sat in our cozy little back parlor, reading the evening paper to my uncle, we were startled by a ring at the door-bell. Now, you must know that a ring at the door bell was a very uncommon occurrence, especially at nearly nine o'clock, P. M. Our circle of friends were small and we were wont to domesticate ourselves in this same little back parlor in a decidedly rural manner. On the present occasion, therefore, the stand drawn up before the fire was covered with papers, books, and "work;" my uncle was stretched out upon the sofa, with his pipe and a book of *Passage Tickets*.

In this condition, as I have said, we were startled by a ring at the door-bell. The blast of the bugle before Front de Beau's castle did not create such a sensation. We were startled by a ring at the door-bell. Now, you must know that a ring at the door bell was a very uncommon occurrence, especially at nearly nine o'clock, P. M. Our circle of friends were small and we were wont to domesticate ourselves in this same little back parlor in a decidedly rural manner. On the present occasion, therefore, the stand drawn up before the fire was covered with papers, books, and "work;" my uncle was stretched out upon the sofa, with his pipe and a book of *Passage Tickets*.

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